

# Peach

## Grow

The peach is one of the oldest cultivated fruits in history. It was originally grown in China. Peaches are thought to bring luck, abundance and protection. Spanish explorers brought the peach to the new world. It is the third most popular fruit grown in the United States.<sup>1,2</sup>

Peaches grow on trees. Young trees should be planted in December or January. Peach trees prefer full sun, 6 hours per day. For the first two years after planting, trees should not be allowed to produce fruit, otherwise the tree may become stunted. The third year, allow the blossoms to fruit. Dwarf grafted peach trees grow smaller (6-12 feet) and can be planted where space may be an issue.<sup>3</sup>

### Two Types

**Clingstone:** Peaches with pits that cling to the flesh (Eighty percent of canned peaches are clingstone.)

**Freestone:** Peaches with pits that easily separate from the flesh (Most fresh peaches are freestone.)<sup>4</sup>

**Fun Fact:** There are over 4,000 different varieties of peaches, even a flat variety known as the “donut.”<sup>3</sup> At least 25 varieties of peaches are grown in North Carolina.<sup>5</sup>

## Choose

Peak peach season for the United States is May through September. In North Carolina, peaches are in season from June to September.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

Fresh peaches should be firm or firm ripe. They should have a creamy or yellowish color. Do not select any green, bruised, discolored or soft peaches.<sup>4,5</sup>

Peaches are also sold canned, frozen or dried. Canned peaches are offered in the following forms: halves, slices, quarters, diced or mixed (peeled, pitted pieces irregular in shape and size). Peaches can be canned in extra heavy syrup, heavy syrup, light syrup, extra light syrup, water, fruit juice and water, and artificially sweetened. Sugar acts as a preservative to protect flavor, color and texture of fruits packed in syrup. Frozen peaches are sold sliced.<sup>4</sup>



## Store

Check for ripeness. If peaches are still firm, they can be held at room temperature until ripe. Serve immediately or refrigerate as soon as possible. Store no longer than one week.<sup>4</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Most of the peaches in the U.S. are grown in California and the south. North Carolina ranks 13<sup>th</sup> in peach production in the United States.<sup>1,6</sup>

## Use

Peaches bruise easily so handle carefully. Do not wash until ready to serve. Wash peaches under clean, running water. Preferably, remove the peach pit before eating.<sup>4,5</sup> To prevent browning, dip peaches in lemon juice.

### What a Peach!

Fresh peaches are a great snack. Add to cottage cheese, yogurt, cereal, waffles, pancakes, salads, or salsa. Or blend into smoothies. Try baking or grilling peaches, too.<sup>1</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Most North Carolina peaches are sold directly to consumers at farmers markets or roadside stands.<sup>6</sup>

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## Teach

### *What's All the Fuzz?*

The skin of a peach is slightly fuzzy. It is typically yellow or cream in color, sometimes blushed with red depending on the variety. Inside the flesh is usually yellow, but it can be white depending on the variety. Did you know a nectarine is a type of peach minus the peach fuzz?<sup>1</sup>

### *Peach Parts*

Did you know that a peach has shoulders and cheeks? The stem connects the fruit to the tree branch. The shoulders bulge around the stem and grow as the fruit matures. The cheeks are the sides of the peach, which can blush (turn red) when exposed to sun. The pit is the seed inside.<sup>7</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Georgia is known as the "Peach State."<sup>2</sup>

### **Class Activity**

#### **Materials Needed:**

- Peach, nectarine, plum, apricot and cherry pits (fruit flesh removed, washed and thoroughly dried)
- Resealable plastic bags for each pit
- Soil, vermiculite or perlite
- Water

#### **Steps:**

1. Explain to students that there are two types of fleshy fruits, drupe and berry. Plums, peaches, nectarines, apricots and cherries are drupes. The pericarp is the wall of the fruit, that may consist of three layers (epicarp, mesocarp, endocarp). Drupes have a fleshy mesocarp and a tough endocarp. They are called stone fruits, because they have stones or pits for their seeds. Compare and contrast the pits.
2. Place one of each type of pit in a resealable plastic bag with a small amount of soil. Store pits at room temperature out of the sun until December or January.
3. Take the pits out of the bags. Soak in water for 2-3 hours. Place in soil in a plastic bag. Monitor for germination (1½ months). If a root develops, transfer to a pot to grow. Observe, measure and record results.<sup>8</sup>

## Eat

### **Peach Power!**

One large peach has just under 70 calories. Peaches are low in fat and free of cholesterol and sodium. They are a good source of vitamins A and C and fiber. Vitamin A promotes normal vision, supports the growth and health of cells and tissues, protects against infection, and helps regulate the immune system. It works as an antioxidant in the form of carotenoids (which form vitamin A). Vitamin C helps form collagen to hold muscles, bones and tissues together, protects us from infections and bruising, aids in healing, keeps our gums healthy, helps our body absorb iron and folate from plants, and acts as an antioxidant to prevent cell damage. Soluble fiber can help lower blood cholesterol. Insoluble fiber helps with digestion. Peaches also have potassium which helps maintain normal blood pressure, regulate fluids and mineral balance, transmit nerve signals and contract muscles.<sup>1,2,5,7,9</sup>

**Fun Fact:** Peach skin is fuzzy and usually removed before baking into recipes. But, eating the skin provides fiber.<sup>3</sup>

Polyphenols in peaches can act as antioxidants to prevent or reduce cell damage. Researchers are investigating the anti-cancer properties of these polyphenols.<sup>5</sup>

**Fun Fact:** To peel a peach, dip it in boiling water for 30 seconds, then cold water. The peel should slide off easily.<sup>5</sup>

## Find

For more peach info and resources, visit:

1. Nebraska Extension, <http://lanaster.unl.edu/nep/fruitveggie.shtml>
2. Georgia Peaches, <http://gapeaches.org>
3. North Carolina State Extension, [www.ces.ncsu.edu](http://www.ces.ncsu.edu)
4. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov)
5. N.C. Peach Growers Society, [www.ncpeachgrowers.com](http://www.ncpeachgrowers.com)
6. N.C. Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, [www.ncagr.gov](http://www.ncagr.gov)
7. Fruits & Veggies More Matters®, [www.fruitsveggiesmorematters.org](http://www.fruitsveggiesmorematters.org)
8. Michigan Peach Sponsors, [www.michiganpeach.org](http://www.michiganpeach.org)
9. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)